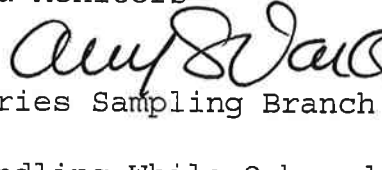




UNITED STATES DEPARTMENT OF COMMERCE  
National Oceanic and Atmospheric Administration  
NATIONAL MARINE FISHERIES SERVICE  
Northeast Fisheries Science Center  
166 Water Street  
Woods Hole, MA 02543-1026

July 6, 2010

MEMORANDUM FOR: Northeast Fisheries Observer Program  
Observers and At-Sea Monitors

FROM: Amy S. Van Atten   
Branch Chief, Fisheries Sampling Branch

SUBJECT: Safety Equipment Handling While Onboard  
Fishing Vessels and Instructional  
Review for Completing the Pre Trip  
Vessel Safety Checklist (PTVSC)

In recent months there have been some complaints from fishermen and other industry members in regards to Observers and/or At-Sea Monitors handling, and in some cases breaking safety equipment, primarily the Emergency Position Indicating Radio Beacon (EPIRB) while trying to obtain the expiration dates to complete the Pre Trip Vessel Safety Checklist (PTVSC). It is of the utmost importance to not handle a vessel's EPIRB and to always ask the captain or a designated crew member to handle the EPIRB if needing to obtain the expiration dates of the EPIRB battery and hydrostatic release. Observers are NOT to remove EPIRB housings or handle EPIRBs directly. The captain or crew must assist so that observers can visually inspect the EPIRB to record expiration dates. Observers and At-Sea Monitors may be subject to decertification if it is determined that they handled a vessel's EPIRB, regardless if the captain gave him/her permission to do so.

Acceptable methods for obtaining the EPIRB expiration dates (*All documents must be no more than 90 days old*) are:

- Visual inspection with assistance from captain/crew
- EPIRB Visual Inspection Card (EVIC) previously issued to the vessel
- United States Coast Guard (USCG) documentation (e.g. Fishing Vessel Safety Examination Form) WITH expiration dates

Always issue an EVIC whenever you visually inspect an EPIRB. Carefully record expiration dates on the front of the PTVSC.

When you issue an EVIC, explain the purpose to the captain and ask that it be retained in a convenient location for 90 days.

Completing the Pre Trip Vessel Safety Checklist (PTVSC) should not be an inconvenience to you or the captain. In most situations, besides adverse weather conditions, the PTVSC should not take more than 10 minutes to complete. If you know that you will be observing on a day trip vessel that leaves very early in the morning, try to arrange to meet the captain the day before to complete the checklist or at least remind the captain that you will need approximately 10 minutes to complete the PTVSC prior to departure.

If you feel that you may need some additional training in order to locate the expiration dates for the EPIRB, life raft or the USCG Safety Examination Decal, or have any questions regarding the PTVSC please contact Mike Tork (508-495-2339) or Lauren Marcinkiewicz (508-495-2212). Also, please refer to the December 9, 2009 memo (Instructions for Completing the Pre Trip Vessel Safety Check List and EPIRB Visual Inspection Card) or the Quick Reference guide (Protocols for Completing the PTVSC) to review the instructions for completing the PTVSC.

You are required to sign and return this page stating that you have read and understand this memo and that you will not directly handle a vessel's EPIRB unless required to do so in an emergency.

I, \_\_\_\_\_ (PRINT NAME) have read and understand the July 6, 2010 Memorandum for Northeast Fisheries Observer Program Observers and Northeast Fisheries At-Sea Monitors; Safety Equipment Handling While Onboard Fishing Vessels and Instructional Review for Completing the Pre Trip Vessel Safety Checklist (PTVSC).

\_\_\_\_\_  
SIGNATURE

\_\_\_\_\_  
ID #

\_\_\_\_\_  
DATE

ENCLOSURES: 2 COPIES OF THE MEMO (ONE FOR YOUR RECORDS AND ONE [YELLOW COPY] TO SIGN AND RETURN), 1 EPIRB VISUAL INSPECTION CARD (EVIC) AND A COPY OF AN EXAMPLE OF A USCG FISHING VESSEL SAFETY EXAMINATION FORM.